Inside This Issue . . .

Feature: Pornography .....p. 6-9

The recent emergence of the Playboy Channel on pay television has got Alberta women's anger and indignation simmering very close to the surface these days. This issue of Webspinner features several articles by Alberta women on the subject. Also, news about the Jan. 18 protests in Alberta over pay television and another on some of the latest research on the effects of pornography and rape.

How We Spun Webspinner .....p. 2-3

The first issue of Webspinner was produced during a four-day workshop Feb. 12 to 15. It was an exciting, amazing experience and the women who worked on it wanted to share the process with the readers. It includes a description of the task, organization and decision-making undertaken as well as a rundown on the furture possibilities and needs of Webspinner.

Disarmament .....p. 5

Since time immemorial women have pleaded that wars be ended and weapons be eliminated. Women all over the world are now getting angry at the constant threat of nuclear catastrophe and have played leading roles in the recent demonstrations in Europe and North America. This article outlines some of the women's groups across Canada which are actively working for disarmament and gives some idea of how Alberta women can become involved as well.

Holly Near's New Album.....p. 10

If any of you managed to make it to Holly Near's Edmonton concert you probably recall a most memorable experience. A new one in store for you is Holly's latest album "Speed Of Light". Mair provides a totally non-objective review of Holly's latest musical effort.

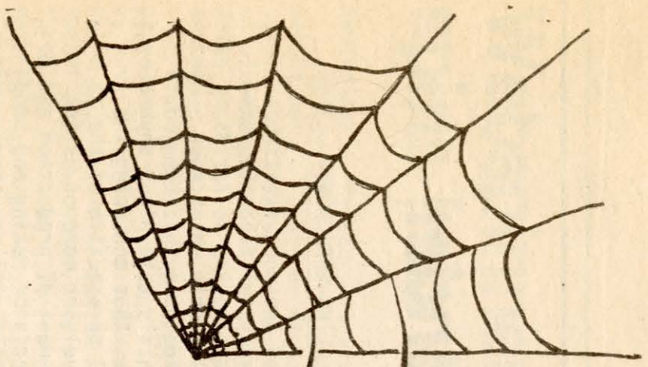
Coming Events .....p. 11

While news and discussion/analysis will be the primary focus of Webspinner, we also include some of the events being planned by women around the province. This issue's information includes a look at all the International Women's Day events being planned around Alberta.

Summer School Planned .....p. 12

A "Summer School for Women Organizing" is planned for June near Calgary. This article gives you the latest information on the summer school planning, its purpose, issues to be dealt with and where you can get more information.

Alberta Women's Newspaper
February 1983



Webspinner

$1.00

Vol. 1 No. 1

Porn climbs back up the Alberta issue list

Our process

Webspinner — the four-day wonder

Who ever heard of such a thing - putting out a newspaper.....
AT A WORKSHOP?

Yes indeed! This, the first issue of Webspinner, was put out almost entirely during a four-day workshop at Every Woman's Place in Edmonton, February 12-15 1983.

Fifteen women, with varying skills and degrees of skill, participated. Some practically lived at Every Woman's Place during the process. Others came and went, as family, job and volunteer committments allowed. Gradually the heap of paper on the floor became mock-up sheets on the walls became the paper you are reading.

At every point along the way decisions had to be made as we tried to keep our process consistent with our goals. Collective decision making, never easy, was made more difficult by the fact that some of us were meeting each other and working together for the first time. The decision making process was aided by built-in "check-in" times, when the group assembled to review what had been done so far and to make necessary decisions for the next phase. A visual aid to decision making was provided by a wall full of flip-chart sheets - time schedules, deadlines, mock-ups, suggestion sheets and task lists.

We rode a fine line this time between wanting a structure which would allow for a well-produced issue, and would also give enough flexibility to allow Webspinner to grow all over Alberta. We were very much aware that our decisions about design and content, for instance, would inevitably be used as a model for future issues. We struggled with the dichotomy between our anger at the silencing of women - anger which is very near the surface when we confront pornography - and our wish to communicate the strength, power and joy which we feel around our achievements, of which this is one.

At least two members - maybe more - of the first working group have made a commitment to take the workshop on the road.

AT A TRAVELLING WORKSHOP??

One of the most exciting and controversial ideas to come out of the planning so far is that the workshop which took place in Edmonton this time could just as easily take place anywhere in Alberta, thus enhancing the provincial perspective of the paper, involving more of us in the excitement of production and sharing decision making and production skills with many more women.

IN MY COMMUNITY???

Sure, why not? These are the basic necessities:-

- at least 6 women who can commit long periods of time over a 4 day stretch, not necessarily every day.
- local women writers, artists and photographers who will contribute copy.
- access to a printer, a typesetter and good typewriters.
- space - the minimum is 2 medium sized rooms; more would be better.

Want to try an issue? It's a very good experience!

MONEY'S THE BOTTOM LINE

Wondering how often you'll enjoy Webspinner?

Plans at present are to publish every two months, with a goal of reaching monthly publication within a year.

The first issue was made possible by a grant from the Secretary of State Women's Program to Calgary Status of Women Action Committee. From now on, however, we're on our own.

By cutting certain costs, (typesetting headlines only; borrowing a typewriter; piggybacking telephone and travel expenses) we were able to keep the cost of producing 3,000 copies to $800.00.

$15,000 would be much better! All the copy could then be typeset, thus producing a much better looking paper and reducing the workload of the volunteer labour force. More pages could be considered; adding a colour would be possible; people could be reimbursed for travel expenses and telephone calls and we could mail complimentary copies to more potential subscribers.

So, the bottom line on money is: if this issue brings in $800.00 in the next 2 months, there'll be another one of similar quality around mid April. For more money - a better product, and workers in better shape at the end of the process. For less - nothing, until the minimum goal of $800.00 is reached.

The necessary $800.00 will be reached if:

80 PEOPLE SUBSCRIBE $10.00 will bring you the first ten issues, whenever and wherever published. And, just as important, will show that Alberta women want and need such a paper enough to take a gamble on her survival!

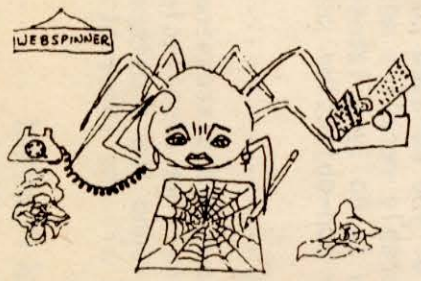
800 PEOPLE BUY this issue at $1 a copy. If you received a complimentary copy and aren't ready to subscribe - we hope you'll consider sending a dollar or more as a donation.

LOTS OF PEOPLE DISTRIBUTE.
If you can sell more copies at $1 each to your friends, and in your community, please write for a bundle. If you have a favourite local store which would like to carry our paper on a regular basis - please write for particulars of retail distribution.

See also page 11 for how to adopt a specific piece of the action.

It really is up to all of us.

Spiderladies . . .



Andrea Ansbacher
Diane Clements
Meaghan Dean
Clare Edington
Nola Erhardt
Janette Fleming
Halyna Freeland
Jo Ann Kolmes
Christine Kulyk
Julie Anne Le Gras
Mair
RaeAnn Robertson
Joan Rogers
Doris Schupp

WHAT'S WOMEN'S NEWS?

Our View of the world is valid

What is women's news? Or, rather, what isn't? Have you ever fantasized a daily paper written from a woman's point of view? What news would be in it that isn't reported in the regular press; what would remain the same; what would be reported differently? How would your local events be handled? What would the front page look like, the editorial page, the letters, the sports, the ads? After fantasizing on this for a while, use your increased awareness to find relevant news locally, nationally and internationally. Contact sources if necessary, check facts, and then rewrite the top news stories of the day from a woman's perspective. Our experience is valid, and our perspective is sadly missing in the regular press. Send your stories, or, if you haven't time to write them in full, your news tips. And your photographs. And your graphics. And your cartoons. And keep asking yourself - where are the stories about what is really happening in women's lives in Alberta?

Webspinner leaves workshop — spins into Alberta

Our goals

Dear sisters, friends, lovers,

Welcome to the first issue of Webspinner, a newspaper dreamed, conceived and created by a working group of Alberta women. We hope this issue marks the birth of a new women's newspaper in Alberta.

Since the Calgary Women's Newspaper ceased publication in April 1981, we have felt that our voices were not heard and that we were not hearing the voices of other women. We missed the forum for feminist discussion of matters that concern us, and are angered both by the sexist reporting of our issues in traditional media and the silence that greets our achievements and concerns. We need a vehicle for discussion, protest and celebration.

As this is the first issue, we wish to share our goals and process. Members of the working group feel that content, form and process are all part of the whole and shape as well as are shaped by each other. At the same time we recognize that these will change as the newspaper grows.

One of our primary objectives is to help break down the isolation which women experience. Alone in our homes, with our lovers or children, at our jobs, we may feel that the difficulties we face are the result of personal failings. Together we can see that the problems lie not in ourselves but in the oppressive circumstances of our lives. Together we can work to change these circumstances and share the joys and sorrows of our lives.

We are feminists. Although we do not propose to provide a definitive statement about the meaning of feminism, by that term we mean that we cherish and value women, that we are involved in finding our power and that we are interested in the process by which other women find their power. As feminists we will critically examine the issues which affect us and oppose all that oppresses us.

The newspaper will be provincial - Alberta based. We expect that most of our energy will come from Alberta women and that most of our friends and readers will be from this province. But we will not be narrowly provincial in what we report -- events from around the world influence our lives and our pages will include a brief glimpse of the global and national scene in Womantides.

Although the content of each edition will be determined by the women who work on that edition, as a general statement we expect that Webspinner will contain feminist analysis of current issues and news which is not carried by traditional media. We will celebrate our accomplishments as women, both collective and individual. We will protest against the injustices we see in our lives. We will dream of our possible future.

We do not have rigid ideological positions, nor do we wish to have. We hope to develop our ideas in discussions with our sisters. They will change and grow. To paraphrase Claudia Dreyfus, "we will learn the feminist basics from the textbooks our our lives".

We hope that you will become involved in this process. There are many ways you can participate. As our readers, you will join in the discussion of the ideas found on these pages and will share our information. Talk about these ideas with your family and friends.

We are anxious to hear from you. In this issue, Our Own Words has been devoted to members of the working group who wish to make personal statements about Webspinner and their involvement. In future editions, this space is for you. We also seek your articles, newsitems, photos, cartoons, poems, stories -- anything that you would like to have published in this paper.

Members of the first Webspinner working group have spun their web this weekend. Join the web.

Our Own Words

I love newspapers. I love to read, to write, to dream, to scheme. I love to see a paper mocked-up and then see the pages take final shape. I love the excitement of receiving the printed paper and reading the contents, seeing the art and photographs, analyzing how the layout worked or did not. I love to imagine the reactions of readers to this article or that and then I love to hear the reaction. I'm hooked.

As well as my addiction to newspapers, I am a committed feminist and have been virtually my entire adult life. As a feminist I am committed to change and feel that discussion is crucial both to define the goals and to move the process forward. To me, a women's newspaper is vitally important.

All week before this workshop I tried to convince myself that I should not come. Like many other women I am overcommitted and often feel as though my life is too fragmented. But wild horses could not drag me away. As I've said, "I'm hooked."

Halya

"What this province needs is a good feminist newspaper." I've often said that. "I want the feminist perspective on the hard news, the sports, even the weather -- and especially the stock market report." I almost said that. So when I found out some other women wanted to do a feminist newspaper I decided to help. Anyway, it's easier than running for Premier, but not as exciting as moving to Toronto -- Alberta, this is your last chance.

Christine Kulyk

It's different, now
different from when
my words were my possessions
to be guarded against harm
to be jealously doled out
with an eye-dropper.

now, trusting
words flow from me to you
i speak, you hear, i write, you read
the words belong to both, to all of us
so when they reach you, won't you
wish them goddess speed,
and send them back to me?

they grow that way
nourished by the web we're spinning
strengthened by our many varied minds
and shared commitment.

Mair

For me, the provincial women's newspaper has meant many things at many different levels. Closer to the surface, it has meant the culmination of a lot of planning and dreaming. It has meant being an active part of producing the first issue of our newspaper; of being part of what I hope will be looked upon as an historical event.

On a deeper level it has meant having waves of anxiety and relief washing over me as I learn more about sharing and working with other women, many of whom I have not met before. It has meant learning a bit more about leading without manipulating, being patient without being patronizing, sharing the skills I do have to offer without monopolizing or judging the skill-sharing process. To be amazed, yet again, at the incredible things we women can do or, to put it more succinctly, I am just so BLOODY PROUD of us!

Meaghan Dean

My Name is Clare. Words and I are mortal enemies! It seems that words and I have a bad working relationship. So I do the graphics. Working on this paper was great although I will probably have to sleep for a week. I am so happy to know that finally we have our own paper!

I decided to get involved in this project because I have been feeling increasingly out of touch with women and our issues. At the same time, I wanted to feel I was contributing to something worthwhile.

Besides, my lover threw me out of the house for the weekend.

Nola Erhardt

A newspaper for us! I can't wait! All that information so important to us concerning women, written by women for women to be discussed all over Alberta and maybe Canada.

To participate in its birth issue and hopefully future issues is so exciting for me that I've tied myself up in knots organizing my life to come to this newspaper workshop.

Andrea

It is very important to me to have a feminist press in Alberta. The confirmation and exploration of women's experience is liberating, empowering, and energizing. It can act as an antidote to the definitions of events by the masculinist media.

To be able to participate in the creation of this support base for women in Alberta is almost overwhelmingly exciting because of its sheer importance at this point in our history. I am lightheaded.

Joan Rogers

Womantide

Women's rights in Ireland

International Women's Year (1975) saw the establishment of The Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movemnet (NIWRM) which was the 'coming together " of women's groups formed around Northern Ireland over the previous decade.

This movement is seen to be serious and now plays a role in political, trade union, and community affairs. It involves itself in problems such as the daily, worsening impact of multiple deprivation in major cities and rural areas where unemployment stands at over 50 per cent; where over half the homes are declared unfit for human habitation; where massive overcrowding and the highest rate of infant mortality in Europe exists.

With one-third of the workforce earning below minimum wages, women must make daily choices between food, clothing, rent and fuel bills because they cannot meet them all. There is also very real pressure for two wage-earners per family in order to stay out of the poverty trap.

NIWRM has found that women now represent 42 per cent of the workforce, with 13.1 per cent working part-time and in the lowest paid jobs, with the least favourable position to determine their own futures. Part-time work also means lack of employment rights, unemployment benefits, and sickness pay.

In its short career, NIWRM has undertaken many well thought-out activities in demanding women's rights, for example, the establishment of a Women's Centre in Belfast, with the emphasis on helping women in whatever way is needed. It also serves as an advice and resource centre, promotes debates and discussions on women's questions.

A Second Charter of Women's Rights has been drawn up adding to the previous 1975 charter and if its demands are granted, it will form the basis for the achievement of equal status for women in their society.

Local groups of the organisation have also been very active, holding seminars on day care provision and the lack of it, job opportunities, discrimination against women in the social security and educational systems.

Women are united in the demand for peace in Northern Ireland and NIWRM considers it to be its task to provide a forum to translate that demand into action. It is effectively mobilising working women on issues that cross the sectarian divide and bringing them into the class struggle that must be fought if any victories are to be achieved. It uses International Women's Day to mobilise women on the streets in active opposition against the economic and foreign policies of the British government - campaigning for nursery schools, not neutron bombs.

They are only too well aware that every penny spent on armaments means fewer teachers, a poorer health service and rapidly diminishing social services. They are angry women and are not afraid to show their anger, knowing there is extravagant waste of human and financial resources in British military spending, while their children go hungry and underclothed.

- Info. from Women of the World

Infanticide in China

China's government policy that families should have only one child, with financial penalties imposed on couples who have more than one, has serious repercussions for Chinese women. They are pressured both by society and their husbands to give birth to a son rather than a daughter in keeping with Chinese tradition which favours sons over daughters.

This is especially so in rural China where families can use the extra labour of sons on private plots and males earn more work points than women in agricultural labour.

The increase of female infanticide, an old Chinese custom, is causing concern in China today, so much so that it has been declared a national problem with Premier Zhoa Ziyang denouncing female infanticide in a speech at The People's Congress.

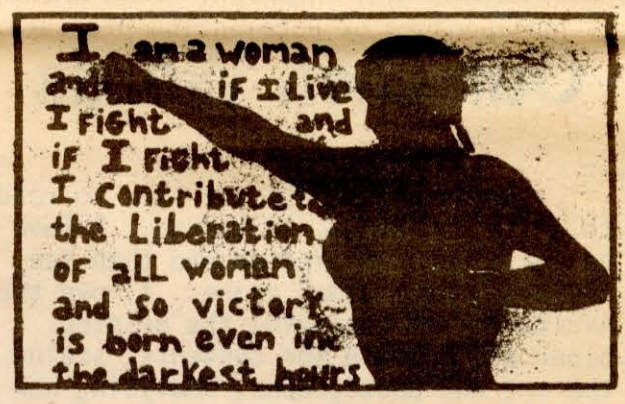
Dead baby girls are being found with increasing frequency, especially in rural China where drowning is the favoured means, and more and more women are having amniocentesis tests performed to determine the sex of their fetus. They are aborting a female fetus so that they can have another chance for a male child in the future.

The People's Daily, the main newspaper in The People's Republic, has written attacks on men who injure or leave their wives for giving birth to daughters, or who kill baby girls. There is also growing concern that twenty years or so in the future there will be a serious imbalance of the sexes.

The Government has instituted measures to make parents more content with a single daughter by allowing a daughter to take her mother's surname, inherit her father's factory job when he retires, and be legally responsible for supporting elderly parents just as sons are.

There has been an appeal by the China Youth News to the whole society to save female babies.

- From Network and Broadside



Peace march in Britain

Thirty thousand British women demonstrated against the Cruise missile at Greenhan Common American minitary base on December 13. Several were arrested. The demonstration time was set to coincide with U.S. Secretary of State George Schulz's trip to Britain. Women have been staging a protest at the Greenham Common Peace Camp since 1981.

- From Off Our Backs

Trying for "respectability"

New laws are to be introduced in Britain which seek to limit the number of sex shops in any one area.

Will this affect David Sullivan, owner of one of Britain's most lucrative sex shop and magazine chains, Conegate, who, last year (1981) earned $325,000 and owns 199 sex shops? Now his organisation is trying to make itself 'respectable' through its choice of chairman. "We are looking for someone with impeccable credentials, perhaps a senior policeman or even a peer."

He appointed Earl Grey, whose family gave its name to the tea. The Earl, a Liberal peer, will earn a mere $110,000 to $200,000 for a job, which, apparently will not be full time. " I am a highly moral person with a strong code of conduct." he says. " I know this business has a bad image, but the sex industry is here to stay. Obviously people have to buy them."

To me this is another example ..of men...using our bodies for other men to gawp at and making vast sums of money in the process. However, they try to disguise it (by appointing peers, or trade union officials, or whoever Sullivan gets to make his organisation more 'respectable' and they are avoiding the question of who buys pornography. Men buy it, not 'people' and nobody is forcing them to.

From a story by Sue George in Outwrite - quoted in Media Report to Women.

Girl lashed to death

The twelve-year-old daughter of the doctor Rad Poor was arrested while at her father's side in Mesched (Province Korassan), for running on the street in shorts. The Passdarad (Khomeini's revolutionary police) sentenced the girl to sixty lashes. In his fear for the child, the father wanted to take the punishment himself, but the revolutionary police would have none of it. The child was whipped before his eyes. She died before the fifty lashes were done.

- From Off Our Backs

Disarmament is everywoman's issue

Since time immemorial women have pleaded that wars be ended and weapons be eliminated. Women all over the world are now getting angry at the constant threat of nuclear catastrophe and have played leading roles in the recent demonstrations in Europe and North America.

Canadian women are supporting the call of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom for women from around the world to converge on Nato Headquarters in Brussels on International Women's Day, March 8.

There will be a demonstration and presentation of signatures to pressure the Nato Council to cancel its 1979 decision to deploy the Pershing II and Cruise missiles in Europe in 1983.

Meanwhile Canada will be holding an Arms Bazaar on International Women's Day and will thereby move one step further towards losing all credibility as a peacemaker. Canada was one of only 8 countries in the United Nations to oppose the recent freeze resolution and has recently signed the "umbrella weapons testing agreement" with the U.S. as groundwork for the testing of the Cruise missile in Alberta.

Women in Alberta must become well-informed on the deadly significance of this Cruise missile and its potential to both destroy the balance achieved by Salt II and make verifiable arms control almost impossible.

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) has produced a Survival Kit with well-documented information. (Send $3.00 to NAC, Suite 306, 40 St. Clair Ave. East, Toronto M4T 1M9.)

Join Voice of Women Canada (VOW) for a newsletter crammed with coverage of women's peace activities everywhere. (Send $15.00 - $5.00 limited income - to VOW, 175 Carlton St., Toronto, ON M5A 2K3.)

VOW's first National Annual General Meeting in three years will be held in Vancouver July 16-18. Write to the Toronto address for a registration form and details for this very important women's peace meeting.

See "Coming Events" in this issue for local peace events. Disarmament is everywoman's issue.

Coping with sexual harassment

Most women in the workforce have gone through an experience of sexual harassment or have seen a co-worker go through it.

We were expected to laugh it off, ignore it diplomatically, or humour the man along. In some cases we did. Most of us were left with anger, feelings of powerlessness and self-hatred, and many of us ended up forced out of jobs because of unrelenting pressure.

Over the last several years - thanks to women activists, writers and film makers - the topic of sexual harassment has been discussed. Human rights commissions have taken complaints and, in some cases, obtained a settlement for the woman. Some unions have included clauses on sexual harassment in their contract demands.

But on a day-to-day basis in most workplaces sexual harassment still goes on. There is a lot more educating to do, a lot more fighting in unions to get clauses prohibiting sexual harassment, a lot more support to be given women experiencing it.

The Alliance Against Sexual Harassment (AASH) was formed in Edmonton in September of 1981. The women of AASH have been working on several projects.

AASH gives support and advice to women experiencing sexual harassment. It also provides speakers upon invitation. A leaflet on sexual harassment and AASH is now being prepared. And AASH has done several presentations of scenes from a docudrama on sexual harassment entitles "Powerplays".

Upcoming events sponsored by AASH in cooperation with other groups include:

* a workshop on sexual harassment to be held on Sunday, March 13th, from 11.00am to 2.00 pm at the University of Alberta (Room 270A, Students Union Building).

*a play on sexual harassment presented by Theatre Parminou of Quebec. The performance will be in April.

AASH can be reached through Every Woman's Place, 9926 112 St., phone: 488 2748, or through the Sexual Assault Centre, phone - 423 4102, both in Edmonton.

Major violence conference planned for May '83 — mark it down

By Meaghan Dean.

Ending The Silence--A Conference Exploring Violence Against Women, will be held in Edmonton May 27-29. The goal of the conference is to provide maximum participation by all women attending to discuss all forms of violence against women. Besides providing an opportunity to develop our understanding of this crucial issue, it is also hoped it will encourage women to return to their communities with some ideas about involving more women in working with violence against women.

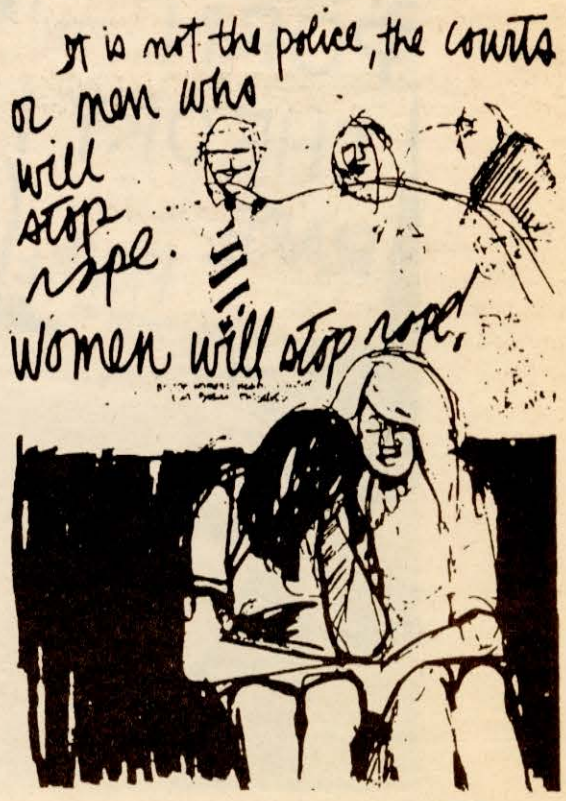
The conference primarily includes an extensive and intriguing slate of workshops. There will also be two keynote speakers: Kate Millett, feminist author and artist; and Debra Lewis, Vancouver feminist and co-author of "Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality". As presently envisioned, Ms. Millett will be speaking on the Friday at 7.30 pm., and will then be attending the remainder of the conference on an informal basis. It is also hoped to schedule an informal discussion session sometime during the conference to give Millett and several other Alberta artists an opportunity to discuss their work. Millett has also agreed to bring along some of her art for display and sale. Debra Lewis will be speaking on the Sunday morning, as well as conducting a workshop on the Saturday. One of Canada's most tireless activists on the subject of violence against women, Ms. Lewis will share her perceptions of the Canadian and Alberta perspective of violence and women. It is also hoped that she will be available on an informal basis throughout the conference.

By far the largest portion of the conference is geared to providing a space for women from around Alberta to share their ideas, observations and experiences about violence against women and to start "comparing notes" on possible strategies for change. The way things are shaping up, it looks as though there will be about 40 workshops to choose from on the Saturday and Sunday. The resource people for nearly all the workshops will be women from around Alberta. The final list of workshops is still being worked out, but here are some of them that might give you a tantalizing idea of what's being planned.

- fashion and violence
- eroticism and pornography
- women and body image
- feminist institutional response to violence (battered women's shelters, sexual assault centres)
- institutions as a form of violence
- limitations of the legal system
- economics as a form of violence
- I Consider Myself a Feminist and I'm Not Sure How I Feel About Abortion
- reproductive rights
- rape
- incest
- homophobia as a form of violence
- Breaking the Rules--how women react to other women's anger
- violence within ourselves
- racism and violence
- prostitution
- direct action against violence against women

Considerable attention is going to be paid to the physical setting of the conference. Women's art and artistry will be abundant throughout the conference location, as will information

Cont'd p. 10



WHY I DON'T BUY THEM

Top ten most popular excuses for abu

By Meaghan Dean

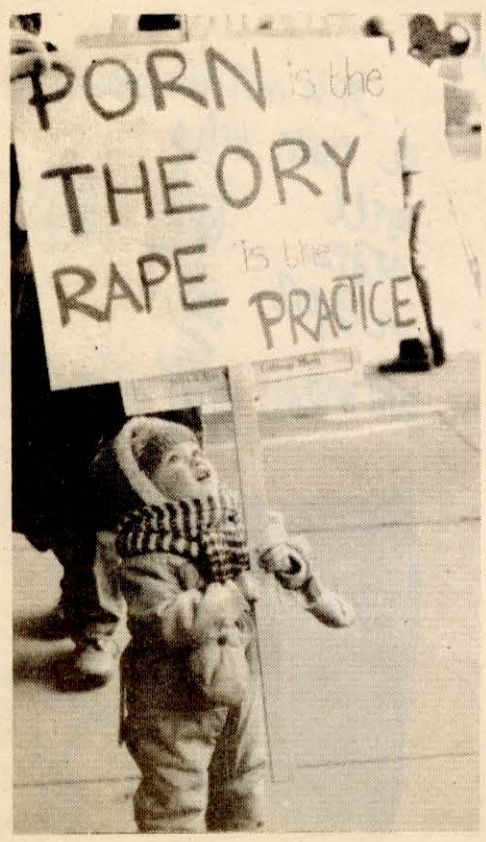
Any given large-scale public debate about pornography produces an aweful lot of words. However, it really produces very little in the way of new ideas from those who support pornography or who so far just don't want to deal with the ugly realities of the subject. The recent actions and discussions about the First Choice "playboy Channel" were no exception.

What clued me into this was my increasing feeling of irritation the more the talk went on. I had this persistent feeling that it was all so repetitive somehow. But how could this be? I asked myself. Here are all these people saying all these different words, seemingly reflecting different reasons for supporting push-button porn. So I started to listen more closely to what was being said and CLICK--the tumblers fell into place. I realized that while many different words were being used, they were being used to make an amazingly small number of statements about pornography.

When you come right down to it, there are no more than about a dozen basic, stock excuses that get dusted off and trundled out by those who still, consciously or unconsciously, condone the abuse of women. Furthermore, when you boil it down even more, it is not hard to see that even these few basic excuses are all pretty much saying only one thing--that violence against women is an appropriate social activity. I am going to share with you what I see as the "top ten" excuses and add why I think they don't hold water. If you can think of some more I'd love to hear them...

Excuse No. 1: It's not pornographic, it is erotica.

I never cease to amaze at the speed with which porn defenders can come up with an implied clear distinction between pornography and erotica when such a distinction suits their purposes. I also notice that those who say this seldom volunteer nor are they asked to elaborate on precisely what they think the difference is. I sense this elaboration is neither made nor asked for because they don't really know and, once more, they don't want to know. I can't help but feel that anyone who condones or is titillated by the humiliation and denigration of another human being would know what erotica was even if they tripped over it.



Excuse No. 2: I'm paying for it so I have a right to get what I pay for.

Oh yeah? Well try putting a contract out to kill someone and see how far you get. I have serious doubts a court of law, for instance, would let you off simply on the basis of a claim that you have a right to get what you pay for. It concerns me deeply that this shallow, cynical excuse was put forth so often and was seriously challenged only once, that I heard, during the debate about pay television.

Excuse No. 3: You don't have to watch it if you don't like it. You can shut it off or not get the pay cable at all.

I am no longer content to hold to the "what you don't see won't hurt you" attitude. I cannot do this because I now know that even that which I cannot see can and does hurt me. No one is more aware than I that I have choices on this matter, including the one to simply not watch it. I trust many others know their choices as well. However, this does not neatly do away with my very basic concern about the attitude implicit in the decision to consider the abuse of women entertainment--and entertainment worthy of airing on the most pervasive communication medium in our society. My choosing not to watch it is not going to change the fact that a lot of my fellow human beings are and that the attitudes and assumptions about women they absorb from this stand to affect me very much.

Excuse No. 4: It's a free country.

The rather dubious accuracy of this statement to the side, my question is--free for whom? And over whose dead (raped, beaten, mauled, objectified) body is this freedom being enjoyed?

Excuse No. 5: It's suggestive, not explicit.

Is that so? Well, that makes me feel so much better to know that you are only suggesting I am a subservient sex object and not explicitly depicting me as such.

Excuse No. 6: People are demanding it so they have a right to get it and we have a duty to give them what they want.

We women have been demanding non-sexist television for years. So far you haven't made it your duty to give us what we want simply because we demand it. However, my concern runs deeper for this excuse touches on the "I want" mentality--what I consider one of the most oppressive and debilitating prevailing attitudes. So many of our current problems stem from the still widely-held belief that all people (especially men) have to do is say "I want" and all manner of destruction is suddenly justified. No matter how many skillful dodges are devised or double-think arguments put forth, the basic fact remains--pornography exists and is in great demand because men want it.

Excuse No. 7: It will be on late at night so children won't be watching. Besides, parents have a responsibility to see that their children don't watch this sort of thing.

If the contradiction in this one wasn't so pathetic, it would be laughable. For one thing, keeping kids from seeing it does not absolve adults of responsibility for their decision to view woman-abuse as entertainment. For another, keeping children from watching these programs may temporarily keep them from learning "bad ideas", but they will still learn one thing--that whatever it is they're not supposed to see now it is obviously something that will be okay for them to enjoy when they "grow up". So, the vicious circle remains unbroken. Finally, if all this is the good healthy stuff so many maintain it is, then why are they so afraid to let children see it? What are they so ashamed of? What makes it "inappropriate" for

Alberta wom

against cable

Edmonton and Calgary women joined the cross-country protests Jan. 18 against the Playboy programing on the First Choice pay television channel. About 90 Edmonton women carried pickets, chanted slogans and exchanged information with interested passers-by outside the downtown Eaton's store. In Calgary about 40 women turned out even though organization of the event began only the night before.

Like many other women across the country, the women are outraged and very concerned that the emergence of "soft core porn" on cable TV marks the "thin wedge" for the escalation of sexist TV entertainment to increasingly violent, hard-core heights (or more appropriately depths). Billed as the "Playboy Weekend", the program material is provided in part by the Playboy corporation and a Canadian company called Glen Warren Productions. Glen Warren is owned 80% by Eatons and 20% by the Bassetts -- hence the Edmonton protest outside the department store.

The Playboy participation in the channels is of particular concern to feminists because Playboy has been, if not the only, a major trendsetter in the multi-billion dollar porn industry. It has paved the way for incest, sadism and kiddy porn in the

...using women in review

a person to see woman-abuse when they are young and "appropriate" when they are older?

Excuse No. 8: We simply would not show pornography on our channel. Just last week we wrapped up production on our soon-to-be-released feature "The Return of Bambi". I think that indicates beyond a reasonable doubt the calibre of programming we maintain.

While I try to steer clear of the dualistic trap that any one thing is necessarily all good or all bad, neither do I buy the idea that doing something healthy somehow justifies doing something unhealthy. There are many electronics corporations which carry out splendid medical research that benefits humankind--funded primarily through that same company's production and sale of weaponry to warring nations. I don't care how many excellent, safe, inoffensive programs a cable company might air, it still does not justify the airing of programs whose "entertainment" value is based on the humiliation and objectification of women.

Excuse No. 9: It's censorship. People have a right to express themselves and nothing or nobody should be allowed to stop them from doing that.

Ah yes, that oldie but goldie. I don't have any answers to this one; I do have many questions. I do not question anyone's right to be concerned about censorship and pornography, but I do have serious doubts right now about their motives for being so concerned.

I still fail to understand how the same people who are so quick to righteously defend the right to free expression at the same time defend a practice and an industry (pornography) whose basic premise is the denial of women's rights to freely be and express who they really are. I also wonder how anyone right now is capable of knowing the finer points of what freedom isn't when as a species we have not yet allowed ourselves to experience what freedom is. I can't help but feel that if we really knew freedom and therefore more clearly knew what it is not, we would be people living in a caring world in which there would be no such violence as pornography.

It is because of these questions that I have doubts about the sincerity of many of those so apparently concerned about censorship. I sense only too often that their motive for debating pornography and censorship is not so much one of concern over the right to free expression as it is a need to use the subject as a means of avoiding dealing with the denial of freedom implicit in pornography. This is why I find it no coincidence that men are more prone to hog any given debate on pornography by going on and on about the horrors of censorship. By and large I find much of the current discussion of

censorship as it relates to pornography to be at best hypocritical, at worst manipulative. One of the many possible ways we could start changing this is if those who are as concerned about freedom of expression as they say they are would extend that concern to include some serious consideration of the effects of pornography on the rights and freedoms of women.

Excuse No. 10: It is not pornographic.

It is pornographic. I know this to be so because I feel the pain--and the outrage.

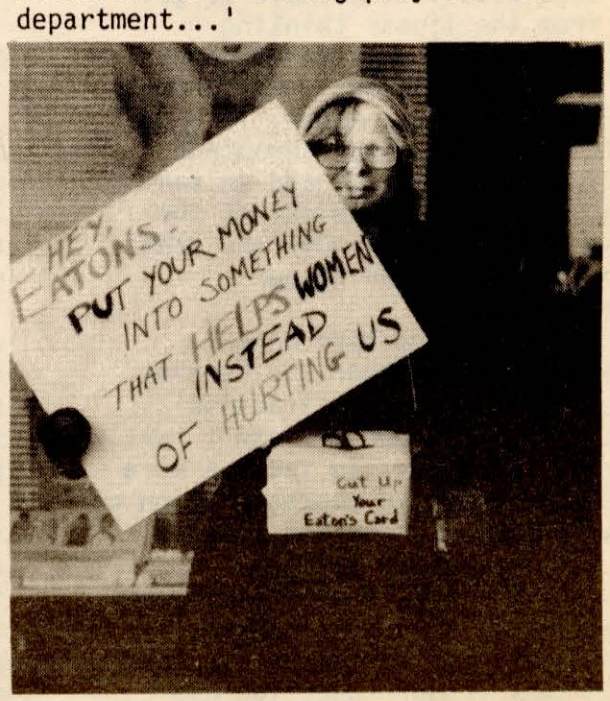
Our View . . .

The mass media loves Playboy, and only rarely will a note of cynicism creep into the cheery pieces written about Playboy's myriad activities. For the mere mention of Playboy is a surefire way for a publication to interject a little sex into the piece.

Witness, if you will, the following excerpts from several articles which have appeared in the Los Angeles Times of late.

A lengthy piece on new advertising methods for law enforcement recruitment (April 15, 1982) began: 'For Playboy magazine, the enticing advertisement seemed a natural: red, feminine lips, slightly parted, puckered around bold, black type urging the reader to "be someone's hero." It's surprising what you can do when you're an L.A. deputy sheriff, cooed the advertisement in the magazine's May issue.'

The Times article continued, 'Using Playboy to solicit sheriff's recruits was a daring ploy for the department...'



...men join cross-Canada protests

...le television push-button porn

magazine and video markets. Many women find it very daunting to see Playboy-type porn now finding a place on television -- a medium which in many ways is the babysitter for millions of Canadians.

Besides getting their message across, Edmonton women were also encouraging customers to cut up their Eatons credit cards and no longer patronize the store. This campaign netted seven chopped up cards at the demonstration. The ASWAC office has since received calls from more women who have decided to turn in their card remnants to Eatons.

Women are encouraged to FIGHT BACK and to write to:

CRTC
John Meisel
Ottawa, K1A ON2
(Licensed First Choice)

First Choice Canadian Communications Corporation
Donald McPherson, President
1 Dundas St. West
Suite 1700, Eatons Tower, Toronto
(Showing the programming)

Glen Warren Productions
9 Channel 9 Court
Toronto
(They will produce much of the material used)

T. Eaton Co.
1 Dundas St. West
Eatons Tower, Toronto
(They control 80% of Glen Warren)

Manufacturers Life
200 Bloor St. East
Toronto M4W 1E5
(15% equity in First Choice, and largest shareholder)

Send copies to:

Judy Erola
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Room 707
Confederation Building
House of Commons, Ottawa K1A 0A6

Francis Fox
Department of Communications
Journal Tower, North Building
300 Slater St.
Ottawa K1A 0C8

ASWAC
Box 1573
Edmonton T5J 2N7

From Aswac Newsletter, January 1983

Research shows pornography increases acceptance of rape

The following excerpts are taken from a paper entitled "Effects of Massive Exposure to Pornography; Assorted Findings and Methodological Advances" presented by Jennings Bryant (Head, Communications Department, University of Evansville) and Dolf Zillman (School of Journalism, Indiana University) to the July 1982 Convention of the Association for Education in Journalism.

The more extensive the exposure, the more accepting of pornography subjects became. This effect was observed for females as well as for males. Females, however, expressed significantly less acceptance than males. That is to say that although massive exposure to pornography created some degree of acceptance among females, they continued to object more strongly to the unlimited distribution of such material.

Perhaps the most astonishing of the findings on perceptual and dispositional consequences of massive exposure to pornography are those concerning rape... Massive exposures resulted in recommendations of significantly shorter terms of imprisonment. (Subjects were asked to recommend a prison term for rape.)

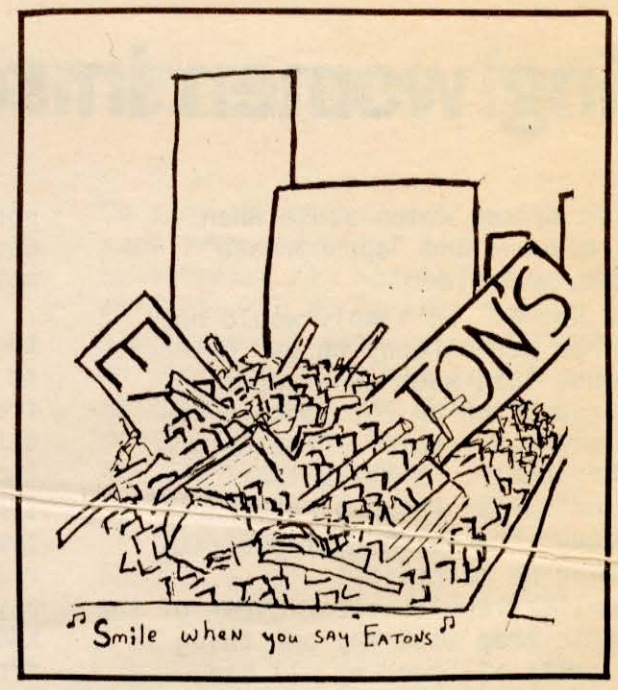
After massive exposure to pornography, rape is apparently considered a lesser offense. Inspection of the frequency of recommendations of minor sentences (incarcerated up to a maximum of one year) agrees with such an interpretation. The number of subjects recommending minimal sentences was markedly higher under conditions of massive exposure than in the other conditions. Unexpectedly, these effects of massive exposure apply to males and females equally. The females' dispositions towards rape and its punishment were apparently just as much influenced as those of the males. However, whereas there was no evidence of an interaction between gender and prior exposure, females recommended longer prison terms overall.

According to these findings, massive exposure to pornography fosters a general trivialization of rape. It can only be speculated that this effect results from the characteristic portrayal of women in pornography as socially nondiscriminating, as hysterically euphoric in response to just about any sexual or pseudosexual stimulation and as eager to accommodate seemingly any and every sexual request. Such portrayal, it seems, convinces even females of the hyperpromiscuous, accepting nature of women. What appears to be trivialized, then, is the impact of rape.

The credibility of the victim's suffering during rape is being undermined. Since the massive-exposure treatment did not entail depictions of sexual access through coercion, it is difficult to see how the trivialization of rape could have been mediated by changing views concerning the use of power and/or violent means in a sexual context.

The suggestion that massive exposure to pornography trivializes rape through the portrayal of women as hyperpromiscuous and socially irresponsible is supported by further findings. Data collected shows a loss of faith in women -- by females and males alike. Massive and moderate exposure to pornography led to sharp declines in the support of the female liberation movement. Furthermore, the assessment of men's sexual callousness toward women exhibits the same loss of respect.

From "Media Report To Women"



PORNOGRAPHY IS VIOLENCE

Cause and effect is not the real issue here

By Jeni Ellman

On Jan. 18 women took to the streets all over Canada to protest soft porn on our television screens. As always, the establishment media was out in full force -- a response I've come to perceive as a mixed blessing.

Yes, we do want to educate the general public about what pornography really is. No, we don't want to engage in philosophical, intellectualized debate about the perils of censorship, the implications of puritanism and whether or not pornography leads to rape.

I believe that we have to get away from the linear thinking involved in the "does pornography lead to rape" argument. Pornography is violence against women; in and of itself it objectifies, threatens, humiliates, lies about and abuses us. As an important ingredient of the sexism pie, it works with the other ingredients in assuring our oppression.

The soft core/hard core distinction is another red herring. The costly (consumer-attractive) packaging of the goods doesn't really alter the content. In fact, a more polished and subtle representation of sexist theory reaches and affects more men than snuff films.

As with rape, another important ingredient in the sexism recipe, there is very little sexuality in pornography -- our objection has nothing to do with being sex-negative. However, a holistic and positive depiction of female sexuality would preclude (by definition) the glamourization of sex-linked violence, sex-role stereotyping propoganda and the use of sex as a commodity.

It is essential to the women's movement that work be done in reclaiming our sexuality. This means that the media not be allowed to distort us in written or pictoral representation. The time and energy women spend on discovering, examining and remedying the degree to which they fall short of the pornographic stereotype of a perfect sex-object/girl-woman is probably proportionate to the time women spend suffering the abusive consequences of being perceived of as passive objects. There has to be respect for our bodies before we can move forward with any measure of safety, comfort and self-determination into the world.

Cont'd p. 11

Porn brings women's struggle right back onto our home turf

By Mair

Right now an Alberta woman is moving out of her comfortable home and looking for somewhere else to live--and all because some uppity feminists chose to protest the use of pay t.v. for pornography.

For three years she has lived amicably and equally with three male "platonic" roommates. No hassles no dumping on her as "the woman", no sexist abuse of any kind. But, the pay t.v. protest changed all that...

Porn magazines appeared at the dinner table. Her opinion of them was sought. She was taunted, teased and made to look at material she found objectionable. A pornographic film was rented and she was forced to watch it. Living there just didn't feel so good anymore.

When I heard that story, I recognized it as an extreme example of a phenomenon I've been noticing, thinking about and discussing often during the last year. I'm in a position to do a fair amount of observation because as part of my work as a feminist and as ASWAC's organizer, I visit many Alberta communities, meet many women and take part in many discussions around issues of violence against women. I've heard several women say pornography is the most difficult issue to talk about with the men they are close to; that communication breaks down on this issue even with couples who pride themselves on

Cont'd p. 11

Challenge through direct action

by Rae Ann Robertson

The festering problem of pornography has erupted once again into a full scale debate thanks to recently announced decisions of several pay-tv channels to include regularily scheduled pornography in their programming. Undoubtedly their decisions and the fairly widespread (male) support of programs such as First Choice "Playboy Weekend" indicate a sad misunderstanding of the true nature of pornography. The exploitative, degrading and abusive images of women in pornography have been discussed at length in the other articles in this issue. I would like to argue that because violence against women is sanctioned in this society, the time has come to take direct action to change this.

Why should the widespread sexist images of women in the mass media go largely unchallenged? Why should the onus still lie on the rape victim to prove her innocence? Why should wife beating be considered a laughing matter by our "esteemed" (male) politicians in the House of Commons? And why should pornography be tolerated as harmless adult (male) entertainment when in fact it reinforces hurtful lies against women? Shouldn't the fact that many women are enraged about the way they are portrayed in the pornographic and advertising industries indicate that there is a very serious problem at hand?

The hatred of women in our society is sometimes quite subtle in its manifestations, but the current runs very deep. Pornography is perhaps the crudest and most brutally honest expression of men's feelings about women. Increasing numbers of women are recognizing this and many feel concrete action must be taken to shock people into awareness of the issues.

We live in a supposedly democratic society where all individuals have the right to freedom of speech. In fact, this "freedom" is often used as a justification by those people who see nothing wrong with the glamorization of violence against women. But there are significant flaws in this "democratic" society. Certainly the pornographic industry is quite free to disseminate lies about women, but how free are women to oppose this with a compassionate, caring perspective? "Freedom of the press belongs to those who control the press," and with the exception of our noble efforts to establish a women's newspaper, this freedom doesn't belong to us!

Due to its immense profitability the pornographic industry has massive financial resources at its disposal with which to reach the public and convey their sick message. The billions of dollars made every year in this industry constitute an instrument of power not available to concerned women who want to present an alternative point of view. So how do we work to change the inequities in the system? We can wage a war of letters... letters to the editor, letters to the president of First Choice, letters to Judy Erola, Francis Fox and Pierre Trudeau. We can participate in demonstrations like the recent one at Eaton's. And we do. But voicing our concerns in these ways has limited effectiveness. It is only the first step.

What we must do is seriously challenge the continued profitability of those corporations which continue to oppress us. Their activities are socially acceptable and there are laws set up to protect their interests. But what about the interests of women? Why should they not be accorded the right to be free from exploitation and objectification? Obviously we do not have this right by law at present.

Laws reflect the norms of our society. They are set up to maintain the status quo. And when we see that the status quo is unjust, we must not hesitate to act. It is time to present a direct challenge to our oppressors. The rules are already stacked against us, so why do we continue to play by these rules? We need to redefine our experiences, but this means breaking norms and traditions.

It is the tradition of women-hatred that we want to destroy. But this will not be accomplished by timid methods. There are many good examples of women who have successfully fought for change by daring to break the rules. The suffragettes in Britain at the turn of the century chained themselves to buildings, smashed windows, participated in mass demonstrations and engaged in many forms of civil disobedience. Some even died for their cause. They eventually won the right to vote - something we now take for granted.

Birth control was illegal in Canada until the late sixties, but concerned women risked stiff penalties to provide badly needed information and contraception.

Thousands of women rallied at the Greenham Common Peace Camp in British this December to protest the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The most advanced weapons kill people but leave property intact. They were demonstrating against war and violence, but hundreds were arrested for disturbing the peace. When the umbrella weapons testing agreement was signed, over 100 people in Edmonton demonstrated for similar reasons. Twenty people occupied the Armed Forces Recruiting Office and had to be forcibly removed by the police.

A group calling themselves "Angry Women" have destroyed several porn shops in Britain. "The Wimmin's Fire Brigade" did the same in Vancouver recently. The Eatons Store in Edmonton has been defaced with the slogan, "PORN SELLS. WHO PAYS?"

All these actions are similar because they occurred outside legal boundaries. The law protects property, but at whose expense? Property is not more important than the desecration of women's bodies and the destruction of human lives. How much longer are we going to take it? Direct Action involves risks, but it is time that those risks were taken. We must refuse to continue existing as passive objects. Let's begin to live as active women.

SOME SUGGESTED BOOKS

Want to read up on all this?

PORNOGRAPHY AND SILENCE, CULTURE'S REVENGE AGAINST NATURE, Susan Griffin, $7.95, Fitzhenry and Whiteside.

Uses the text of pornographic books, the plots and images of X-rated movies, and the pages of innumerable magazines to build an argument that pornography is an expression of modern culture and a contradiction of the natural instincts of people.

FEMALE SEXUAL SLAVERY, Kathleen Barry, $3.95, Avon Books.

The victimization of women through sexual slavery cuts across all lines of race, class and culture, and this book exposes the social, political and economic patterns creating the enslavement.

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT;WOMEN ON PORNOGRAPHY, Laura Lederer, editor, $11.95, Gage Publishers.

A readable, thought-provoking collection of articles, interviews, research, and rousing calls to action by women who are leaders in the struggle to stop violence against women.

HIDDEN VICTIMS;THE SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN, Robert L. Geiser, $8.50, Fitzhenry and Whiteside.

Explores child pornography, child prostitution, incest, rape and the emotional harm done to children as a result of violence. One of the most comprehensive and up-to-date books available on the sexual abuse of children.

AGAINST OUR WILL --MEN, WOMEN AND RAPE, Susan Brownmiller, $4.95, Bantam Books.

An eye-opening revelation about rape and other violent crimes committed against women which tell us so much about the hidden currents of female-male relationships.

Holly Near's new album has it all

Speed of Light by Holly Near
(Redwood Records)
Reviewed by Mair Smith

It's no good. I can't possibly write an "objective," "legitimate" appraisal of Holly Near's new album Speed of Light. My love for Holly's music grows exponentially with each new album, as does my gratitude to her for making songs which touch my life deeply. I'm still at the stage of bursting into tears at Speed of Light --so, no objectivity.

What does Speed of Light have for me? Music to dance to; music to make love by. Solid and developing politics. "Quotes" to live by--that we're already living by: "It takes every muscle in my heart to dance at our revolution" (from Emma Goldman). Simplicity. "We gotta find a way to keep the U.S. out of places where it doesn't belong/ and it doesn't belong in El Salvador" (El Salvador). Clarity in complexity as in: "Unity," which "doesn't always mean agreement and it doesn't ever mean the same," but "we are the sailors and we're in mutiny/ The safety of this journey depends on unity." And of course, that gorgeous sensuous consistent voice. . .

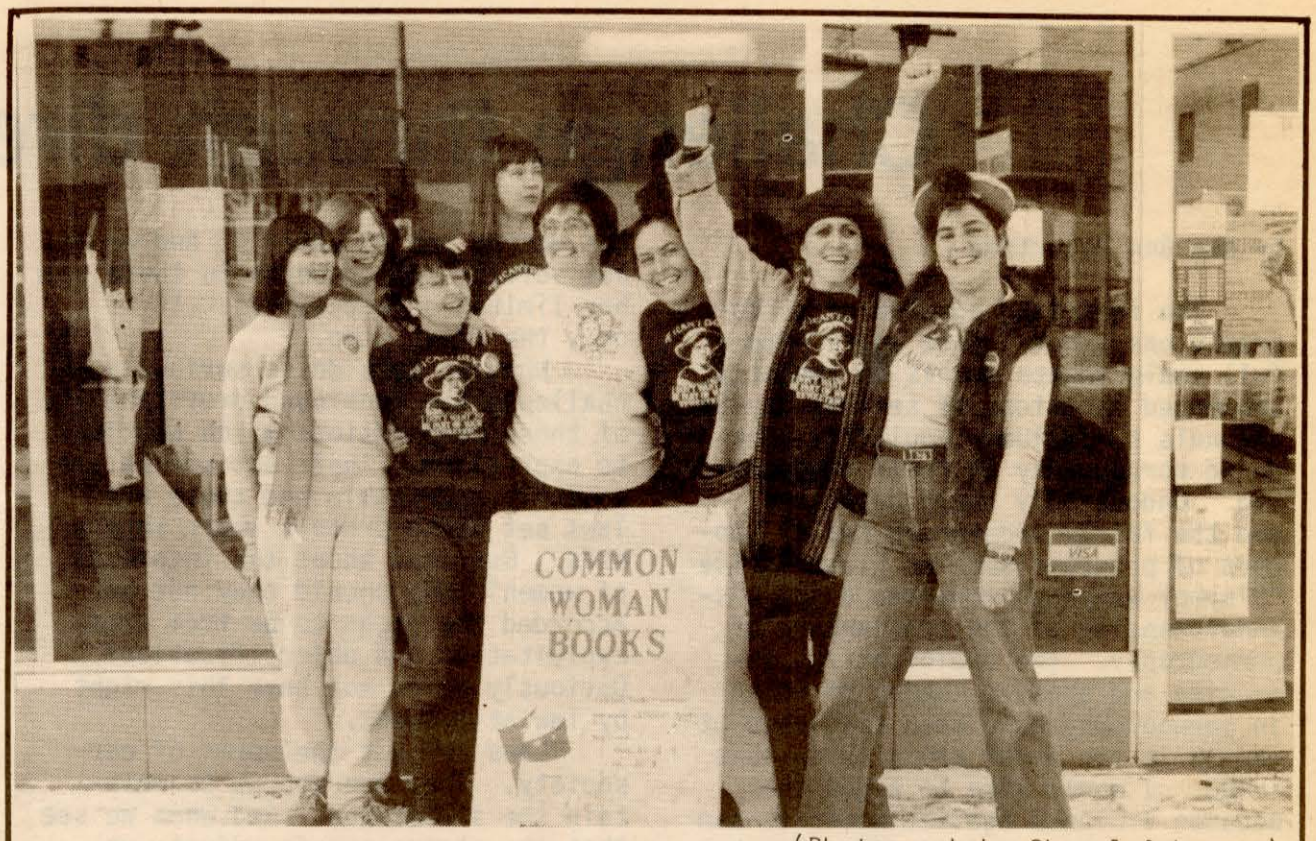
I got mine at Common Woman Books in Edmonton. Does anywhere else in the province carry Holly's music? Will you let me know?

Thank you, Holly. Come to Alberta again soon.

Reflections

By Susan Vensel

Sometimes when I am all alone
The thoughts come tumbling in
It's 'yes or no' or 'this or that'
Or 'only if' and 'what of that?'
So I jump up--to write them down
To help me "see" just what I feel
And often I'm surprised to find
A glimpse of insight to my mind.
As quickly as I get it down
More thoughts come flooding in
I want to learn to 'let it be'
And step outside the spin.



(Photograph by Sheryl Ackerman)

Members of the Common Woman Books Collective celebrate the forthcoming publication of their new Catalogue.
From right to left (the only way to go):
Clare Edington, Jo Milne-Home, Sara Berger, Maureen Warren, Mairi Maclean, Halyna Freeland, Christine Kulyk, and Andrea Ansbacher.

FEMINIST BOOKSTORE

New catalogue in the making

By Christine Kulyk

Common Woman Books store, in Edmonton, is still the place to go in Alberta for feminist and lesbian books. The popularity of the store among Edmonton women has increased steadily over the years as the store progressed from a mail-order operation to a store front location, with a greatly expanded inventory. The bookstore collective recently decided that the time was ripe for publication of a new catalogue listing all of the titles carried by the store.

The new Common Woman Books Catalogue will be a huge volume, listing about 2500 titles, categorized by subject, with a brief description of the contents of each book, as well as special features highlighting the works of prominent authors. Books by Canadian authors will be specially indicated, and there will also be a listing of the records, periodicals, and other non-book items available in the store.

Members of the collective, and friends of the bookstore, are preparing the Catalogue with the assistance of a grant from the Secretary of State, Women's Program. Excitement is mounting as the publication date--sometime in March of this year--finally nears, after long hours of work. This extensive listing of feminist and lesbian literature, with the accompanying descriptive material, should prove to be a valuable resource, as well as providing exciting evidence of the vast amounts of material which are now available on feminist themes and issues --and the areas which have not yet been covered.

People living outside of Edmonton will be able to purchase books by mail from the Catalogue, according to terms which will be explained in the Catalogue. Many orders for books already come to the store from all around Alberta, and from as far away as the Yukon Territory. Visitors from Calgary, Red Deer, and many other parts of the province drop in regularly, with the occasional visitor from Saskatchewan stopping by to stock up on feminist literature before returning home.

Common Woman Books is a non-profit feminist bookstore, operated by a collective of volunteers. In addition to operating the store, the collective promotes women's art by sponsoring concerts and authors' readings, and by taking selections of books to sell outside the store at various educational and entertainment events in Edmonton, and elsewhere when possible. The new Common Woman Books Catalogue will be available in early April, for a cover price of $1.00, from Common Woman Books, 8208 - 104 Street, Edmonton, Alberta.

Major violence conference planned for May '83

tables. A number of various alternative spaces (music room, coffee room, exercise room, massage room, etc.) will be set up to provide conference attendants with comparatively quiet places to go and work off what might be the considerable energy generated in the workshops.

We are still in the process of contacting resource people for the workshops. If you are interested in being a resource person or know someone who is, let us know by calling 488 8863 (Edmonton office of the Alberta Society of Women Against Violence). Also, anyone interested in helping organise the conference is welcome--call the above number for more information on how you can help. The conference organising committee meets every two weeks in Edmonton and anyone interested in attending is welcome.

An information package containing more detailed information about the conference (exact location, registration, accommodation, timetable, costs, workshops, etc.) will be mailed out by the end of March. If you or someone you know would like to receive one, contact us. Be sure to let your friends know about the Edning The Silence conference. It is shaping up to be one of Alberta's major gatherings of women on the subject of violence against women. Hope to see you there.

Look Out

Feb. 17 "If you love this planet" - film night at Every Woman's Place. 9926-112 st. Edmonton 8 pm. Women welcome.
Feb. 19 ASWAV conference committee benefit concert for "Ending the Silence" conference. Lynne Weeds and other surprise artists. Edmonton Public Library Theatre 8 pm. Tickets $5 at Common Woman Books, Every Womans Place and ASWAV. Info 488-8863.
Feb. 23 Voice of Women meeting, 7:30, Betty Mardiros' house. 8902-120 st. Edmonton. Current info on disarmament and means of seeking peace. For more info contact Virginia Cornish at 438-1643. New members very welcome.
Feb. 28. "Women and Men in Families: Changes and Their Consequences" - a public forum. Speaker: Dr. Margrit Eichler. Education Building North, Rm. 2-115 U of A. Info: 432-3093.
Mar. 5. Peace lecture by Gordan Edwards, Pres. of Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility (CCNR). 6 PM Potluck Supper, Garneau United Church, 11188 - 84 Ave.
Mar. 10. 7:30. Edmontonians For A Non-Nuclear Future (ENNuF) General Business Meeting, Newcomers welcome. Call Joan Rogers, 488-3356, for place.
Mar. 23. Peace Walk from Cold Lake to reach Edmonton Easter Apr 3, 180 miles. Call Fiona McGregor, 432-7051, to join march, get information, or to help out.
Apr. 14 "Agency Night" sponsored by the Calgary YWCA Women's Resource Centre. Over 100 agencies have been invited participate. Free to public
Apr. 30 Calgary Council of Women annual general meeting. Wainright Hotel at Heritage Park. 9:30-2 pm.

Mar. 8 I.W.D. Activities:

Mar. 8-13 "Women's Awareness Week" at U of A. Theme: Women and Work. Topics to be discussed: women in politics; women and unions; women as professionals; women in education; sexual harrassment. Contact Teresa Gonzalez at Students' Union for more info. 432-4236.
Mar. 5-12 EDMONTON IWD Committee is organizing the following events (contact Susan Craigie for more info. 437-5019): 5/MARCH from Alberta Legislature to Churchill Square 12 noon/ 6/Dim Sum at China Garden Restaurant 11 am. 9645-102 ave. Make your own reservations. 8/"Women in Unions" at Unitarian Church, sponsored by Edmonton Working Women. 9/Speaker from Irish POW committee, Erewhon Books. 8pm 10/"Women's Athletic Night" 13712-104 ave. sponsored by Womonspace. 11/Every Woman's Place Birthday Party 8 pm. 12/Common Woman Books - sale.
Mar. 8 RED DEER/Noon hour speeches at the library. EDSON/International potluck. GRANDE PRAIRIE/Banquet and speaker. CAMROSE/Celebration, torchlight procession. LETHBRIDGE/Drop in and films at the Bowman Gallery. FORT McMURRAY/Films and speakers at the Macdonald Island Pavilion.

COURSES AND CONFERENCES

Mar. 1 "A Critical Analysis of Policies Which Affect Families" - a workshop. Instructor: Dr. Margrit Eichler. Corbett Hall, Rm. 128, U of A. Fee: $50. Limit 30. Call 432-3093 for more info.
Mar. 7-Apr, 13 (7 Wednesdays) and Sat. Apr. 23 Volunteer Training program for Planned Parenthood Assoc. of Edmonton. 5-7:30 pm./ Sat. 10-4 pm. Contact office for more info.423-3737
Mar. 26 Federation of Medical Women (Calgary branch) & Faculty of Medicine at U of C present "From Woman to Woman: You and Your Health" a program on women's health care issues. Orange Theatre, Health Sciences Centre, 3330 Hospital Drive NW Calgary. 9-4:30 pm. Fee $25. Deadline March 11.
Apr. 5-28 (4 Tuesdays & Thursdays) "Women: A Look at Reproductive Health" Overview of issues pertaining to reproductive health & opportunity for women to discuss their concerns with other women. Contact Planned Parenthood Assoc. of Edmonton 423-3737. $20

Communication breakdown cont'd

openness, egalitarianism and a sincere commitment to communicate. Many of you will recognize this in your own lives. I know I did--remembering, years ago, finding a stash of my husband's pornographic magazines and knowing instantly that I didn't have the courage or will to open up the matter with him. I "excused" him in my mind because he'd been under a great deal of stress; I "excused" myself by telling myself I had his best interests at heart. I promptly blocked it from my mind. Now, 16 years later, divorced, more thoroughly steeped in feminist analysis and active in the struggle against violence against women, I remember this incident with a clear click of recognition. I was scared back then, terrified of the communication breakdown in a very important relationship which I knew would follow my attempts to express my feelings of shock and revulsion.

Pornography brings the struggle right back home again. Remember what it was about for many of us at first--dishes, diapers and the politics of housework? Remember how scary that was--every day dealing with the people we loved the most or were most afraid of, or both, opening up our growing feelings of exploitation? Knowing that they would be trivialized, misunderstood and denied, and yet knowing too that if we were to gain personal freedom it must start at home. Remember our CR groups and how much we needed them as we clung together for support? Then we took the fight outside our homes and into the workplace and the legislature and the streets--and it was still scary because now we were struggling with the Boss, the Government and Big Brother Bureaucrap. But we were also learning new skills, honing old tools, weaving our webs and valuing each other. And then somewhere along the line we discovered that we had absorbed the hatred of women in our society; that we no longer saw rape, incest and battery survivors as "other" women; that we felt personal pain when seeing another woman's body trivialized and tortured for titillation. So we share our feelings with each other, talked, read, planned protests and community discussions--and some of us went back home to our men for support because, of course, they'd understand how we were feeling...

The issue of pornography epitomizes for me the appalling communication gap existing between men and women at this time, which is in itself symptomatic of an insane society. It does not surprise me that those of us, women and men, who are working to heal ourselves and the world we live in are focussing a great deal of our energy on it. I'm encouraged by the number of women who have the courage and will to pursue the issue with men who are close to them, and who try to get under the usual defensive reaction and find some common ground. You're braver than I was, sisters!

For my part, I'm no longer wanting to explore my feelings of pain and outrage only in supportive womanspace. I want to hear and take part in debate with women and men who are genuinely concerned about working to change our woman-hating society. I want to hear from you on any thoughts and feelings you may have, and I want to share mine further. I want us to reach a place where "prevailing community standards" find sexist exploitation unacceptable.

Reclaiming our sexuality cont'd

How much of the crap have we internalized? How much have men bought into it? (Remembering even the "good ones" have been fed instant orgasms by pimp Hefner since an early age.) How can we sensitize people to an issue which has such complex layers of meaning for us?

I think of the men who found the place settings in Judy Chicago's "The Dinner Party" offensive because of their visual similarity to vaginas. It seems that men can package the female body into a billion dollar industry that is inoffensive to other men, but the real thing remains fearful, repulsive and open to derision.

We must take responsibility for our own bodies and the collective "body" of woman. The bottom line is that our sexuality belongs to us and our private parts are not on the market. In reclaiming this basic power we must be careful not to be sidetracked by contrary and fatuous arguments. We are not puritans, we are not fascists -- we have just flashed on to the entire game and are protecting ourselves by breaking the rules.

Summer school for women organizing

By Julie Anne Le Gras

A Summer School for Women Organising will be held June 17-26 at the Silver Creek Ranch, Water Valley, (about 110 km northwest of Calgary.

Our experience continues to show the value of intensive development of organising skills to advance the cause of women. To strengthen and expand our current organization, the Summer School Collective has planned a nine-day school with emphasis on analysis and practice. That is, for women to understand our own situation is not enough. We must learn how to use this information to advance our cause. Thus, the school will be a mix of informational and technical workshops. It will combine the expertise of feminists and women organizers with the knowledge we gain from sharing our experiences. And it will provide a forum for coordinated strategy sessions so women in Alberta can work more closely together.

The focus of summer school workshops will be on three main themes: HEALTH, WORK and POWER. Blocks of days will have a primary focus on one of these themes while the two other themes will be integrated into content in order to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the themes throughout the school. Laws and legislation will be addressed as they relate to subjects discussed in workshops, and will constitute workshops in themselves. Typically, in each theme, we have planned informational and technical skills workshops, as well as an overview of "the Alberta scene", and special issues related to the theme. Other workshops address specific, non-theme-related skills. Finally, there is provision for regional and issue caucuses, and unstructured time to rest or work as you wish.

Participants are encouraged to attend the whole school. However, theme "blocks" will accommodate those who are unable to spend the full nine days with us. Fees will reflect the number of days you can attend and will be subsidized for women who are unable to afford the full fee.

The final registration brochure will be available in early April. We stress that this is a school for women who are prepared to share their learning with others. For that reason, we will have to apply certain selection criteria in order to ensure an optimum cross-section of regionality, age, occupation and so on. Normally, an early registration will give you the best chance for attendance. We encourage you to plan time off work now to attend the school, and to adhere to the preregistration deadline.

We invite you to get involved in planning or contributing to the work. This is an opportunity for women from all parts of Alberta to contribute resources, ideas and skills--as Summer School organizers, as resource persons and as participants. Please contact us indicating your skills and interests. Correspondence can be mailed to:

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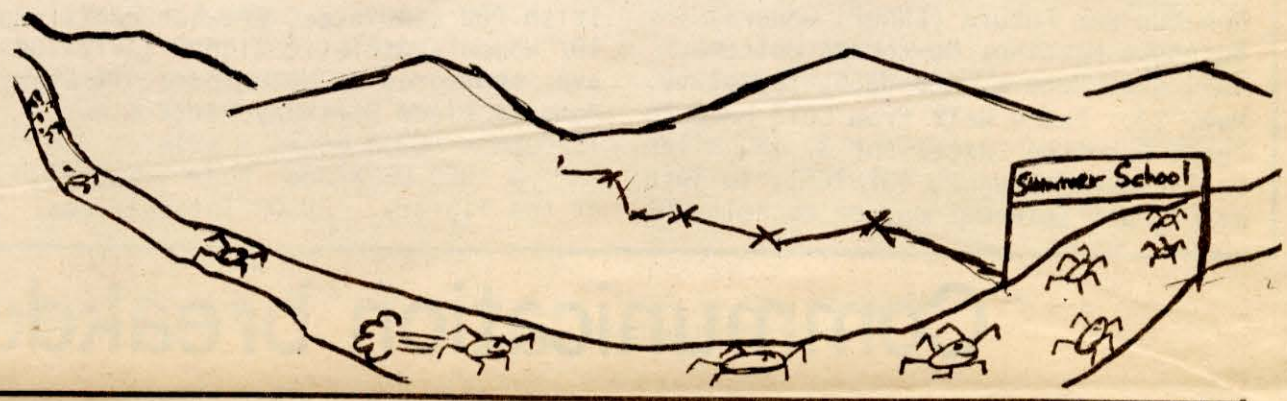

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Here are some ideas - add your own. Suggest some of the larger items to your women's group or business. Adoptive parents will be listed in the next issue unless you ask to remain anonymous.

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I'm attaching comments, criticism, congratulations, paens of joy, and names of more people who would like to receive Webspinner.

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